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Another Side to the Pentagon Papers

Grave doubts are being expressed by some high officials of the Johnson administration as to the merits of the so-called "Pentagon Study" which was the basis of published articles last week about the Vietnam war.

For one thing, it is pointed out the document was not made available to important officials until a few days before the administration ended so that it could be carefully appraised. An examination revealed that much White House material, for instance, was omitted as well as comments by certain officials of departments involved in the events mentioned.

The impression which some former officials have is that the "study" was prepared by biased writers who were intent on carrying on the anti-war crusade of the day.

Why didn't the authors of the memorandum or study confer with all the high officials who had a part in the policy-making process? The document doesn't present the complete record of what confronted the Johnson administration and the reasons for choosing the various steps that were initiated in the hope of persuading the North Vietnamese to enter peace negotiations.

President Johnson is probably the only man who knows the whole story, though some of his cabinet officers were well acquainted with the circumstances that led to certain actions being taken. So far as is known, they were not consulted by the writers of the Pentagon study.

The American people are entitled to both sides. The press

has an obligation to dig up the facts as to which officials even knew about the Pentagon document and why the others who took part in the making of policy have not been given an opportunity to express their opinions in the newspaper articles which have since appeared.

The question of whether newspapers have a right to publish documents which are classified is one that the Supreme Court will have to decide. The main point of interest today, however, is the news contained in them as revealed in the New York Times and the Washington Post. The stories printed are certainly news, but whether some of the texts of communications from our government to diplomats or ambassadors abroad should have been paraphrased and not printed verbatim is something that needs to be settled by the court to insure ways of protecting government codes.

As matters stand now, the American people have been given what many officials of the last administration consider a one-sided story. They say it leads the public to think that their own government was engaged in "deception." In fact, the word "credibility" is frequently used in the criticisms of the Johnson administration as a result of what has been published about the way the Vietnam policy was developed.

There is another phase. Every administration has tried to avoid any step that would force the country into a larger and larger war in Vietnam. If a move was made that appeared to threaten the enemy with retaliatory measures and these were not taken, is this evidence of a

lack of good faith or of "deception" of our people? In war, adversaries make all kinds of moves to influence the action of the other side.

The United States also was trying to get assistance from other countries so that more troops would be mobilized to impress both Red China and the Soviet Union. These are normal practices and should not be regarded now as just part of a political game. Foreign governments, especially those in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, appreciate what the United States did in making big sacrifices in Vietnam. Escalation of the war was one way to show the Communists that they would not be allowed to take over Southeast Asia.

Foreign policy in the United States is not made by one administration. It extends back into other administrations, and any study of current problems must take into account the importance of maintaining friendly relations with other governments in Asia as well as Europe which depend on America's potential help.

One of President Johnson's close friends told this writer that the Pentagon Study should have been submitted to the Department of State immediately after it was written. Why wasn't this done?

Now, as it is made public, the assumption abroad will be that the department acquiesced in the findings of the report, or at least had an opportunity to approve or disapprove of its contents, which doesn't happen to be the case.

Meanwhile, the American people are not being told what really happened. Former President Johnson is the only man who today can give the nation all the facts.